

The Mosque of Wazir Khan

Rambling through the narrow bazaars of Lahore,
a city renowned for its historic splendour;
cramped in the middle of the marketplace, I discover
Wazir Khan's mosque, its bejewelled brilliance of decor.

The floral motifs, the intricate calligraphy, the richness
of enamelled colours on arches, minarets and domes,
the glittering pietra-dura inlay of semi-precious stones,
lapis-lazuli, onyx, cornelian, agate and topaz

Compete for my attention with skilled stone carving,
stone-inlay work, stucco tracery and fresco paintings;
not forgetting the mosaic tiles, carved bricks and glass painting.
Once a sheer celebration of magnificence, now sadly fading.

I remove my chappals, cover my head out of respect,
as I step through the gateway into the forecourt,
moving from one world into the next;
as I enter paradise on earth, I am blessed.

My guide translates one inscription for me—
*In the cornfield of our world, whatever is sown by man
is reaped by him in the world to come.
In your dealings then, leave a good foundation.*

Once a thriving enterprise between commerce and learning,
the mosque has lost its purpose, history has a way of forgetting.
Enamelled tiles emblazon every surface of this edifice
whose grandeur haunts its aging, uncared for facades.

The eyes of children playing in the streets follow me
as I walk out of the gateway into the midday scorching sun.

SHANTA ACHARYA